

# USA Clay Target League

//// by john caffey



Before my recent trip to Minnesota, I had never heard of the USA Clay Target League. I was a competitor in the Amateur Trapshooting Association (ATA) and I was aware of the Scholastic Clay Target Program (SCTP). So, when I was asked if I wanted to go watch the largest youth clay target shooting sport program in the world, I had to go check this out. The competition was the 2024 Trap Shooting Championship that was held at the Alexandria Shooting Park in Alexandria Minnesota—a very nice club with 50 camping sites equipped with amp power and water. The club offers 18 trap fields as well as skeet, 5-stand and archery fields if you're in the area

you should check them out. When we got there, I was surprised to see so many people. Checking the shooting roster, I was amazed to see that they had over 8500 registered shooters participating in this one eight-day event. Do the math on that over 1000 shooters a day which makes it the largest organized shooting event in America. When I saw that I had to find out more, so I looked up Drew Tri the media director for the League to find out how this all got started.

## History

Back in 2000, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources noticed that the number of shooting

ranges in Minnesota had dropped by more than 10% in the past 10 years. They determined the reason was the average age of gun club members was 57 years old with very few school age shooters joining the ranks. They had youth programs but those were short term summer programs that didn't focus on long term involvement to keep youth shooters interested enough to stay past the summer program. While looking for a way to solve the problem, Jim Sable was named the director of the youth program at the Plymouth Gun Club in Plymouth, Minnesota. There

he mentored a program at the Orono schools which introduced six students a week to trap and skeet shooting. As the word spread, more and more students wanted to try it and more and more schools wanted to be involved. In 2008, the Minnesota State High School Clay Target League was started with three teams and 30 student athletes. With an official organization to oversee the league it quickly grew, doubling the

number of shooters and teams for five consecutive years. By 2014, the Minnesota State High School Clay Target League Championships had become the largest shooting event in the world. Schools from other states heard of Minnesota's success and wanted to form their own State Leagues. Due to the growth in



## 2022-2023

49,337 Participants  
in 1,625 Teams – 37 States

## 2021-2022

43,009 Participants  
in 1,466 Teams – 34 States

## 2020-2021

36,690 Participants  
in 1,310 Teams – 34 States

## 2019-2020

13,421 Participants  
in 414 Teams – 18 States (COVID)

## 2018-2019

32,810 Participants  
in 1,042 Teams – 25 States

## 2017- 2018

26,426 Participants  
in 804 Teams – 20 States

## 2016-2017

20,109 Participants  
in 615 Teams – 15 states

## 2015-2016

15,745 Participants  
in 445 Teams – 12 states

## 2014-2015

11,077 Participants  
in 317 Teams – 3 states

## 2013-2014

7,046 Participants  
in 191 Teams – 2 states

## 2012-2013

3,637 Participants in 114 Teams

## 2011-2012

1,715 Participants in 57 Teams

## 2010-2011

707 Participants in 29 Teams

## 2009-2010

340 Participants in 13 Teams

## 2008-2009

60 Participants in 6 Teams

## 2007-2008

30 Participants in 3 Teams

## Clay Target League



2012 the USA High School Clay Target League was incorporated as a non-profit organization focused on spreading youth shooting sports into other states. Since its inception, the league has continued to grow making it the fastest growing high school extracurricular activity in the nation.

This 2024 year, there are nearly 52,000 participating athletes, with over 13,000 new shooters joining their schools' teams thanks to the acceptance of local shooting ranges, coaches, and parents that contribute to the team's success. High school teams have a nine-week season in the Spring that concludes May 25. They will have their state tournaments in June which are attended by tens of thousands of shooters trying to qualify for the USA High School Clay Target League National Championship in July. College athletes have a shorter season in the spring and then return in the fall for the USA College Clay Target League National Championship in early November.

The USA Clay Target League is America's largest clay shooting organization. It offers trap, skeet, sporting clays, and 5-stand leagues to secondary and post-secondary schools across the country. USA Clay Target League is the only 100% school approved clay target program in America. To have a team, the participating school must approve, with most schools even having lettering for the athletes. To top it off thousands of

dollars in scholarships are provided to qualifying seniors by the League and post-secondary institutions each year.

The League's co-ed and adaptive nature are key attractions to schools across the nation. The USA Clay Target League is fully title IX compliant with both male and female athletes competing on the same team. It is also an "adaptive" sport which allows students with physical disabilities to participate.

The USA Clay Shooting Leagues priorities are SAFETY, FUN, and MARKSMANSHIP, in that order. In the schools across the country that offer the league, there has not been one reported injury since its inception in 2001—making it the safest sport in school. Before an athlete can participate, they must complete a firearm safety certification course. ■

If a school is interested in joining the USA Clay Target League, they can find more information at [usaclaytarget.com](http://usaclaytarget.com) or contact them at [support@usaclaytarget.com](mailto:support@usaclaytarget.com)

